

2022 MCA Election Guide

NOW is the time to raise your voice for Maine kids! The upcoming November elections represent a critical opportunity to engage with candidates and make sure child and family issues are at the top of their agendas.

The winners of the Governor and state legislative races will determine who sets the agenda for the next four years. The outcome of this election will impact the lives of the around 250,000 children who call Maine home. Since they can't vote, they're counting on the caring adults in their lives to speak up for them and ensure their voices are heard.

MCA's 2022 Election Guide highlights key issues affecting children and families, offers opportunities to address those challenges, and provides sample questions for candidates. This guide provides individuals like you the information you need to be a strong advocate for children. You can help Maine kids right now by ensuring candidates understand the issues, and by electing leaders in Maine who will prioritize policies and investments that will ensure a brighter future for all children and families across our state.

Why This Matters

Building a strong, equitable future for Maine starts with children and families. They form the backbone of our communities and represent our potential for prosperity. When communities have the resources to provide security, connection, and opportunity for families, children have the best chance to thrive early on and throughout their lives.

The early years of a child's life represent a time of unlimited potential and enormous growth. They also represent the most fragile time, with a child's early interactions forming the foundation for their future success. These early years often pose significant challenges for families navigating the stress of economic insecurity, health and well-being, and safe and affordable care for their children.

Elected officials have the opportunity to support the healthy growth and development of our children, and the safety and security of their families, in communities across our state. Robust, sustained investment in programs, services, and systems that support children and their families is essential to ensuring the success of the next generation and a brighter, more equitable future for Maine.



Children live in families, families live in communities, and communities make up our great state – each is dependent on the other to achieve shared success.

Together, we can elect Maine leaders who will prioritize state policies and investments that reflect our values, provide healthy futures for our children, and offer greater opportunity for all.

Please share this guide and help get out the vote in November!

Early Care and Education

All Maine children and their families should have the resources, opportunities, and support needed to provide young children the foundation to thrive and meet their full potential.



To achieve this vision, elected leaders should prioritize:

Improving the screening, identification, and coordination of early intervention services for our youngest children

Maine is well below the national average in identifying children under age one for early intervention services.¹ Maine's Child Development Services (CDS) served just 98 infants (0.80 percent) in 2021. Among all other states, Maine was ranked just 46th for this in 2020.²

Increasing access to high-quality, affordable child care

Parents struggle to find and afford reliable care for their children so they can work. In Maine, 70% of children under age 6 have all available parents in the workforce.³

CANDIDATE QUESTIONS:

Q What will you do to improve early intervention services to support healthy child development?

Q What will you do to ensure working parents can find quality, affordable child care?

What Candidates Can Do

You can be a champion for children by advancing policies and investments that support children and families thriving across our state.

- ✓ Make children and families a priority!
- ✓ Create and support legislation and funding that is centered around the needs of children and families.

Health, Safety & Well-being

All Maine children should have a safe, permanent home, and receive quality physical, oral, and mental health care that is accessible and affordable for their families.



To achieve this vision, elected leaders should prioritize:

Establishing and investing in primary prevention programs that strengthen families and reduce child maltreatment

A high number of families experience potential challenges to safety and stability. A total of 26,825 calls were made to report potential child abuse/neglect in Maine in 2021.⁴

Increasing the number of children and families with affordable, quality health care coverage

Many families in Maine struggle to afford health insurance for their children, which is important for routine care to support their healthy development. In 2020, an estimated 14,000 Maine children lacked health insurance coverage.⁵

Increasing investment in the behavioral health system to address the increased mental health needs of Maine youth

Maine should expand its recent investments in children's community-based mental health services. In June 2022, the United States Department of Justice found that Maine was in violation of the Americans for Disabilities Act by not providing adequate community-based mental health services for children.⁶

CANDIDATE QUESTIONS:

Q What will you do to ensure children are safe and nurtured in families?

Q What will you do to reduce the uninsured rate for Maine children and make health care coverage more affordable for families?

Q What will you do to address the mental health needs of Maine's youth and families?

Family Economic Security

All Maine children and families should have access to the resources they need to achieve economic stability. This includes safe, affordable housing; food security; and improved access to and delivery of services.



To achieve this vision, elected leaders should prioritize:

Reducing barriers and improving family-centered delivery of state safety net programs

Families who are experiencing economic stressors need access to effective, supportive services to build a path out of poverty. In 2020, an estimated 30,612 children were living in poverty, with wide variation in rates by county.⁷

Creating a robust paid family leave system that works for all Mainers

Families need access to paid time off from work at times to provide care for their babies, children, and older adults. Only 15% of working people have access to paid family leave.⁸

CANDIDATE QUESTIONS:

Q What will you do to make sure family supportive services are working for the people they are meant to serve?

Q What will you do to ensure Maine develops a system of paid family and medical leave?

Equity

All children and families in Maine should have access to the resources they need to reach their full potential, within systems that provide equitable opportunities to thrive.



To achieve this vision, elected leaders should prioritize:

Assessing and addressing inequities in services and systems that support child and family well-being by race, geography, disability, immigration status, sexual orientation, and gender identity

In Maine, due to systemic and historic racism, Black children are more than twice as likely to be living in poverty than the state average.⁹

In Maine, comprehensive neo-natal services for infants born at less than 32 weeks gestation are only available at two hospitals: Bangor and Portland.¹⁰

In Maine, 30,503 children in the public school system have a diagnosed disability (19.1%), representing the highest state rate in the country.¹¹

In Maine, 38% of LGBT youth report experiencing an offensive comment at or on the way to school, compared to 4% of all students. Youth who identify as LGBT are more likely to experience violence and discrimination at school, at home and in the community.¹²

CANDIDATE QUESTIONS:

Q What will you do to make sure all children and families have equitable opportunities to thrive?

What You Can Do

✓ Find out who the candidates are. Email them and share that issues affecting children and families are a priority. Use this guide to ask questions and inform elected officials about what they can do to support children and families.

✓ Challenge candidates to raise child and family issues and solutions during public forums, town halls, and other campaign events. Ask candidates questions from this guide at public events.

References

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